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# Town Meeting



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BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

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Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

## Should We Teach Sex Education in Our Public Schools?

Moderator, GEORGE V. DENNY, JR.

### Speakers

RALPH ECKERT

J. PAUL DE RIVER

IDA KOVERMAN

CARMEN WILLIAMS BOYLE

(See also page 12)

COMING

—July 20, 1948—

Does Military Preparedness Mean Security?

Published by THE TOWN HALL, Inc., New York 18, N.Y.

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 12



\$4.50 A YEAR: 10c A COPY



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The account of the meeting reported in this Bulletin was transcribed from recordings made of the actual broadcast and represents the exact content of the meeting as nearly as such mechanism permits. The publishers and printer are not responsible for the statements of the speakers or the points of view presented.

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## THE BROADCAST OF JULY 20:

### "Does Military Preparedness Mean Security?"



The program of July 13, 1948, originated in Bridges Auditorium, Claremont College, Claremont, California, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m., EDT, over the American Broadcasting Company Network.



Town Meeting is published by The Town Hall, Inc., Town Meeting Publication Office: 400 S. Front St., Columbus 15, Ohio. **Send Subscriptions and single copy orders to Town Hall, 123 West 43rd St., New York 18, N. Y.** Subscription price, \$4.50 a year, 10c a copy. Entered as second-class matter, May 9, 1942, at the Post Office at Columbus, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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GEORGE V. DENNY, JR., MODERATOR



JULY 13, 1948

VOL. 14, No. 12

## Should We Teach Sex Education in Our Public Schools?

### Announcer:

Tonight we welcome you to another beautiful spot in Southern California, about 40 miles east of Los Angeles, which is the home of our hosts, Claremont Summer Sessions. Nestling in the heart of hundreds of orange, lemon, and walnut groves, and almost in the shadow of majestic Mount Baldy, lies this attractive town of Claremont, with a population of about 4000.

The Claremont Colleges consist of Pomona College, founded in 1887, Scripps College, exclusively for women, founded in 1926, Claremont College, essentially a graduate school and summer session, established in 1925, and Claremont Men's College, whose primary aim is to prepare its 300 students for government service and business.

Here is an atmosphere ideally suited to the academic life, where its students can learn to deal with facts and ideas with complete ob-

jectivity. It's just the kind of atmosphere in which we should discuss tonight's important question, "Should We Teach Sex Education in our Public Schools?" What do you think?

And now to preside over our discussion, here is our moderator, the President of Town Hall, New York, and founder of America's Town Meeting of the Air, Mr. George V. Denny, Jr. Mr. Denny. (*Applause.*)

### Moderator Denny:

Good evening, neighbors. I know you'd like to be with us here tonight in the midst of this beautiful and fruitful valley, where we're the guests of the Claremont Colleges at the eastern outpost of spacious Los Angeles County. This seemed to be a highly appropriate place to discuss the highly explosive subject, "Should We Teach Sex Education in our Public Schools?"

Now, most of us have feelings



and attitudes about this question, but very few of us really have any knowledge on which to base our judgments. Our speakers, however, have expert knowledge on this question, but in spite of their knowledge of the facts of juvenile delinquency here in the State of California and elsewhere, and most particularly in Los Angeles, they come to diametrically opposite conclusions.

Dr. Ralph Eckert, Consultant of Parent Education for the State Department of Education of California, and Mrs. Carmen Williams Boyle, attorney, member of the Parent-Teachers Association, who has a long record of work in social agencies and children's courts, feel that our public schools should provide sex education for children at an early age. On the other hand, Dr. J. Paul deRiver, police psychiatrist of the City of Los Angeles, and Mrs. Ida Koverman, now Director of Public Relations of M.G.M., who has also served on the Governor's Conference on Youth, and most recently on the 1947 Los Angeles County grand jury, feel that the school is not the place to teach young children sex education.

Well, this is a major problem which concerns every citizen, parent and nonparent alike, and will continue to be a major problem whether the Democrats nominate Harry Truman tomorrow or not. Neither Mr. Truman nor Mr. Dewey can solve this problem for

us. It's something that we, as citizens in our various communities must decide for ourselves, and let us hope that it will be decided after careful study of the facts and not on the basis of prejudice or some particular ideology, or just plain laziness.

Like all Town Meetings, our program tonight is designed to lay the problem before you as fairly and objectively as we can with the aid of qualified experts. Further study and decision is up to you.

Now let's hear from the Consultant of Parent Education for the State of California, who is this summer directing the training center on family life and social relations at the University of California in Berkeley, Dr. Ralph Eckert. Dr. Eckert. (*Applause.*)

#### **Dr. Eckert:**

I thank you. A physician was talking to a group of mothers about sex education of their children. One mother asked with some agitation, "But, Doctor, must we tell our children about sex? I have a young daughter and personally I should prefer that she know nothing about it until she is about to be married."

The doctor's reply was, I think significant. "Madame," she said, "I'm afraid that what you want has nothing to do with it. Your daughter is bound to get a sex education. It's only a question of what kind and from whom."

Unless we assume that we can keep youth ignorant of the sexual side of life, then we must agree with Shakespeare that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

Dr. DeRiver, you assume that any attempt to teach the facts of life arouses curiosity and leads to experimentation. Actually, it is incomplete knowledge that produces curiosity. Adequate knowledge is more apt to satisfy it.

The question is: Do we want children and adolescents to have the knowledge and attitudes appropriate to their age and development, from adequately trained teachers, given to them naturally in the classroom?

Dr. Alfred Kinsey has given me permission to quote from his incomplete and still unpublished study of children, which he says shows very clearly that children's attitudes are influenced far more by their playmates than by their parents. That is why it must be done in groups.

Psychologists agree that sex play and sex talk among youngsters is their attempt to gain, or to show off, knowledge. If children are given all the facts they need at each stage, if all the children are given the same facts, much of the reason for sex talk among youngsters is automatically eliminated.

Has the study of nutrition made gluttons of us, or robbed us of the satisfaction of eating? It has restrained our eating habits and better health is resulting.

The Kinsey report shows that the sex pattern of the American male needs considerable improvement, and the report also shows that education appears to be the most significant factor in improving them. Not only is a well trained teacher better qualified to give sex instruction than the average parent, but the schools have certain visual aids which parents do not have to assist in teaching the physical facts.

Within the last year the University of Oregon film, "Human Growth," for elementary and junior high school, and the McGraw-Hill film, "Human Reproduction," for senior high schools and junior colleges, have become available.

In Oregon, 97 per cent of the parents who have seen the film, "Human Growth," approved its use in the classroom. When I showed it to a group of 116 parents and their children in my own community, everyone of them approved its use, and the vast majority thought it should be used before the sixth grade.

I disagree with Dr. DeRiver and insist that the earlier this material is presented, the more casually and naturally children accept it.

A friend's four-year-old child was playing with the five-year-old next door. A little seven-year-old joined them and asked, rather breathlessly, "And do you know where babies come from?" "Why,



yes," said the five-year-old, "my mother told me that years ago." Not to be outdone, the four-year-old added, "Why, my mother told me that when I was on the way to the hospital to be born." (Laughter.)

When will parents and educators face frankly the fact that adolescence is the period of time between which a boy or girl becomes sexually mature and capable of reproduction, and the time that the same boy or girl becomes socially and emotionally mature and ready to marry? How rapidly will our schools adjust their curriculums to increasingly teach young people and their parents the most important thing of all—how to be a successful and happy member of a family: first, the one we grow up in, and secondly, the one we create?

When will we challenge the mis-education for marriage so many are receiving from romantic movies and literature, and help young people to understand the true nature of love and marriage? Can't we teach them that a happy marriage is not so much the result of *finding* as *being* the right person? Shouldn't we stop talking about *falling* in love, and start understanding how people *grow* into love?

Isn't it important for young people approaching marriage to know the difference between love, infatuation, and passion? Isn't it about time that we stopped teaching boys, "You just can't under-

stand women," and realize that scientific data is increasingly available to help both sexes to understand each other, and so learn to live together more harmoniously? Must increasing numbers of young people land in divorce courts because of this ignorance?

We've learned a great deal about the four freedoms. There is a fifth freedom as vital as the others—freedom from ignorance. Our public schools are constantly striving to better meet the needs of boys and girls. Is there any greater need today than to teach boys and girls to have more wholesome relations with each other, for men and women to live harmoniously together? From kindergarten, to classes for brides and parents. The challenge is before us. We must go forward.

#### Moderator Denny:

Thank you, Dr. Eckert.

Another important official out here in California who ought to know a great deal about this question is the police psychiatrist and director of the Sex Offense Bureau of the City of Los Angeles. We are happy to welcome him to Town Hall, Dr. J. Paul de River.

#### Dr. DeRiver:

Dr. Eckert says that we already have sex education in the public schools and that 95 per cent of the parents approve of sex education. I say that 95 per cent of the fathers and mothers I have asked

are against it. We both must be pretty smooth talkers.

The teaching of sex is a moral issue and should not be a part of the educational system of the elementary grades. This is just as much a part of the parents' duty as it is to clothe and feed the child, and just as much a moral issue as teaching right from wrong.

Dr. Eckert states that he showed a sex education film to a group of 116 parents and that 70 per cent of these felt that it should be used before the sixth grade. This naturally appealed to the parents and was easy for them to understand, for their own characters were already formed and their minds matured, at least to the point where they could see it from a scientific viewpoint, which shows that the parent is much more ready for sex education than his child.

But Dr. Eckert failed to point out the most important fact—that sex education at the wrong psychological time is bound to cause psychic trauma which naturally he wouldn't be familiar with because he is not in a position to see the results of this, but I, as a psychiatrist, am called upon to correct the damage.

The teaching of sex other than at the right psychological time for the individual child breaks down natural modesty, violates the laws of Christianity, makes cynics and sophisticates of juveniles, and invites discussions on the subject by

individuals whose characters have not been fully molded.

Sex education at the wrong time awakens impulses and you cannot put old heads on young shoulders. You can't give a child some tools and expect him not to use them.

I wouldn't think of giving my son, when he reaches nine or ten, a nice, new, shiny automobile, teach him how to run it, what makes it go, and then say that he must wait until he is old enough to use it. This is ridiculous.

You say this, applied to sex, would necessitate the teaching of more and more about sex, which is treading upon dangerous ground. In the past, laws have been made to protect children, but with sex education, they'll know all, and we shall have to completely change our code of laws.

I agree with Dr. Eckert that eating is an appetite, and so is sex an appetite, but the teaching of sex will not curb the sexual appetite. It is not against the law to eat in public, but this is not true of sex, which proves that sex and the sexual appetite is based on a moral issue.

I don't believe that parents are as disinterested as some educators would have us believe, and I do believe that parents are much more capable of raising their children than any other person or persons.

From "Love and Marriage and Divorce in Russia" by V. F. Calverton, I quote, ". . . the sex



education of the individual in Soviet Russia begins at an early age. Sex instruction is a part of a general curriculum in every educational institution of consequence."

To further quote "... marriage and divorce is freer in Soviet Russia than in any part of the Western world." Certainly this speaks for itself.

Dr. Eckert says that the Kinsey report proves something. I say that the Kinsey report proves nothing. The Kinsey report was manifestly written not for scientific consumption but for the lay public. This book does not tell the men of science anything new. It is not constructive, but rather destructive.

Now, if religion is such a personal problem to the individual that the Supreme Court ruled it out in teaching it in the public schools, then certainly you mothers and fathers do not want to have your children taught sex, which is even more of a personal problem, particularly by individuals whose basic philosophies may be entirely different from your own.

Teaching us to restrain our instincts is different between man and beast. You can't catalog human emotions. You'll always find a child who worries about his position in life, just as you will find a child who jokes about it, and the one who merely passes the whole thing off.

Our attitudes and our behaviors

are largely environmental, but we are born with certain tendencies towards things. Because sex is an instinct, a child's sex life is influenced unconsciously from his babyhood by the pattern of the home, his mother, father, sisters, brothers, and playmates. Every moment of his early homelife colors his future sex life.

His belief in God, his respect for his fellowmen—all this builds up character until he is old enough to learn and put into practice his sex life. Character versus impulse—that's how simple it is.

Dr. Eckert is calling upon the parents to give the signal to go ahead, but I call upon the parents to stop before it's too late. (*Applause.*)

**Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Dr. DeRiver.

Now it is certainly time for us to hear from the ladies, and Mrs. Carmen Williams Boyle, an attorney and a member of the Parent-Teachers Association, who has been referee of the Los Angeles Juvenile Court for a period of seven years and is now a member of Governor Warren's special Crime Commission on Juvenile Justice, is to be our next speaker. Mrs. Carmen Williams Boyle. (*Applause.*)

**Mrs. Boyle:**

Thank you, Mr. Denny. Dr. Eckert, in his opening remarks, painted the broad picture of what we mean by sex education. Dr. De



River has used it to mean simply the fact of reproduction, which is only a small part of sex education.

It seems to me that disagreements on this subject arise more frequently from a misunderstanding of the term and a misconception of meaning than from an honest difference of opinion on the subject.

So, first, I would like to say what sex education means to me, and secondly, what I deem the function of the public schools to be.

First, education itself is the process by which knowledge is acquired and attitudes formed. It comes out of every sort of experience in the home, community, and school.

Sex education, or what seems to me a better term, education for family living, must concern itself with far more than simply imparting information. It cannot and should not be isolated from the rest of the curriculum, or restricted to a particular stage of the child's development. Science has proved that sex education in its broad sense is a continuing process which begins at birth.

Secondly, through the public schools, we try to induct our children into our manner of life. The primary purpose of schooling is to develop wholesome, well integrated people, prepared for life and living.

How can we prepare children for life unless we teach them God's

greatest miracle—the creation of life?

Too often, we literally force our children to learn about sex from other children. Sex education should be geared to the child's needs and level of maturity. As far as the schools are concerned, it cannot be avoided and should be included from first enrollment to graduation.

Imagine my surprise when I attended nursery school as an observer to have my young son, aged four, in reply to a question as to how far he could count, modestly answer, "Oh, I don't know, forever, I guess. But I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll count to twenty-five, because we're expecting a baby at our house the twenty-fifth of this month."

The smart teacher used this opportunity to congratulate him and matter-of-factly tell the class the good news in such a way that the prospective birth of a baby became just one of those delightful run-of-the-mill events of every-day life.

That was the attitude I had been trying to develop at home. As mother and teacher we were co-operating, not competing, and I felt both of us were none too many in this difficult field.

The question is not, "should sex education be taught in school or in the home," but rather "how can the home and the school work together to do the best possible

job in educating in this important area?"

Public education is doing much that is fine and helpful. Adult education classes in rapidly increasing numbers are giving sex education to parents. Nursery school and kindergarten teachers are trained so that they can answer the natural questions of their small pupils in an honest and beautiful way.

The program of nature study in our elementary schools introduces the child to reproduction in its many forms, and gradually a vocabulary appropriate to his age level is developed. In social studies the child is given an appreciation of the importance of the home and the role of the father and mother. This, too, is sex education.

As adolescence approaches, many subject matter fields in the junior and senior high schools cooperate in helping young people and their parents understand and deal with the problems of this period.

I wish to take exception to Dr. DeRiver's contention that sex education in the schools leads to sex offenses. Over the seven-year period during which I acted as referee of the Los Angeles Juvenile Court, many of these cases came before me for hearing. I was always appalled at the complete lack of understanding these unfortunate youngsters and their parents

had of the causes and the significance of their sexual misbehaviour.

Dr. Smith, chief psychiatrist at San Quentin, our California State Prison, recently said, "Seldom, if ever, have I found among criminal sex offenders a person who had an adequate sex education from either his parents or school." He deplored this lack and recommended sex education in the public schools as the only solution of this problem.

To help our young people meet the complexities and challenges of life today, the best we can give is demanded of our homes, our churches, our communities, and schools. This cannot be accomplished under an "either-or" philosophy, but requires that we work together.

Let the parents at home with love, understanding, and honesty answer the child's first questions. To do a good job at this, which is none too easy, due to all our years of mis-education, they will probably need to take one of the excellent classes for parents in adult education.

After the child has reached school years, let trained and qualified teachers impart the scientific information, give the guidance and counseling, develop the right attitudes, yes, and re-educate, when necessary.

This ability to do a good job will increase with study and experience. Our children will thereby become better teachers and better

parents, and therein lies our hope of the future. (*Applause.*)

**Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Mrs. Boyle. Now, it's time to hear from the dynamic director of public relations of the biggest movie studio in Hollywood, M.G.M., who has found time to serve on many important boards and committees in Los Angeles and the State of California, and who has particular interest in juvenile problems here and throughout the country, Mrs. Ida Koverman. Mrs. Koverman. (*Applause.*)

**Mrs. Koverman:**

Thank you, Mr. Denny. After listening to the three previous speakers, it is quite evident that we all agree on at least one point—the necessity for sex education. We differ as to the method of instruction and the age at which such instruction should start.

I most certainly do not feel that this subject of sex should be a part of the educational process in our schools in the very early years of a child's life, but that it should await the period when his mind normally becomes interested in this subject.

Both Dr. Eckert and Mrs. Boyle stated that they feel a child, from the time it is born, should know exactly where it came from, that it should never be able to look back upon a period in its life when it did not know its origin. I am

afraid that I cannot agree with them on this point.

In my opinion there is quite a difference between ignorance and innocence. The age of innocence is perhaps the most beautiful time in our lives. Everything is exciting and wonderful to the child, and neither the child nor its parents should be deprived of the happy innocence of those years.

As the child's mind develops and the matter of sex naturally becomes interesting to him, his questions can be answered very simply and adequately by the parents. If sex becomes a part of the school program at any age, I feel that it is a subject that should be taught separately and not in mixed groups.

I believe that a detailed knowledge of sex would tend to make self-conscious both a small child and its parents and destroy the normal relationship between them. Sex education should not be thrust upon a child before he is ready for it and can understand it.

There is no excuse for parents to say they do not know how to answer these questions. There are so many helpful books and pamphlets issued by various qualified organizations available to libraries, lectures, et cetera, all of which cover the subject in the minutest detail.

If the schools are a training ground for children in the essential knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic and so forth, and do a



good job of this, I think they will have done their part in the child's education.

Religion is the most important thing in everyone's life, and if it has been deemed wise so far to leave the training to the parents and the home, it would seem equally wise to take the same attitudes towards sex education.

When the son of a friend of mine was about 11 years old he came to his mother with questions. She put before him an illustrated magazine article which he studied for a while and seemed entirely satisfied with the explanation. The next day he came running into the house with some of his companions and demanded the magazine again. While the boy and his companions thumbed the pages, my friend wondered what questions would be next. To her surprise, her son finally said to his friend: "There, see? There are

those new planes I was telling you about."

This incident might indicate that in planning a child's education one must not teach him to walk until he has at least made an effort to stand erect. Nor would one teach a baby to eat meat before it has had teeth.

It seems to me that all nature grows gradually to fulfillment: first the seed, then the plant, then the blossom, then back to the seed, but certainly not the blossom until the plant has grown strong enough to carry it.

I should like to report to you my experience on the 1947 County Grand Jury. I found that practically every instance of juvenile delinquency which came before us was caused by broken homes. Children had been uprooted from their home surroundings.

The grave trouble in all these cases was the lack of parental care

## THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

**CARMEN WILLIAMS BOYLE**—A member of the Parent-Teachers Association, Mrs. Boyle also serves on the Governor's Crime Commission on Juvenile Justice.

**IDA KOVERMAN**—Mrs. Koverman is director of public relations for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and is in charge of all children and youth at the Studio. She is a member of the Governor's Committee on Juvenile Justice.

**J. PAUL de RIVER**—Dr. de River is police psychiatrist of the City of Los Angeles and founder and director of the Sex Offense Bureau of that city.

**RALPH ECKERT**—Well-known educator and psychologist, Dr. Eckert has been Chief of the Bureau of Parent Educa-

tion of the State of California since 1946.

He was born in Lexington, Ohio, in 1906, and is the recipient of an A.B. degree from the University of California; A.M. from Univ. of Southern California; and Ph. D. from the University of California. Dr. Eckert was an instructor of speech at San Jose State College, California, from 1932-40, and an instructor in the department of psychology from 1940-46, prior to his present affiliation with the State of California Dept. of Education.

A contributor of articles to various journals, Dr. Eckert is the author of a number of books on social relations, among them *A Mental Hygiene Approach to the Teaching of Speech as a Means to Personality Adjustment*, 1940, and *Five Steps Ahead in Parent Education*, 1947.

and affection — in plain words, adult delinquency. I fail to see where sex education in their early years would have been of any help in solving the cases of these children.

The most frequently voiced complaint of parents seems to be their inability to instruct their children in sex. I heartily agree with Mrs. Boyle in regard to adult education along these lines. Courses in this subject should not only be available but should be urged upon parents. Instructing your children in sex matters is your bounden duty and is a duty you dare not neglect. Thank you. (*Applause.*)

**Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Mrs. Koverman. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that there are many questions you'd like to ask each other, and so let's take a few of them before we get the questions from the audience. Will you join me please, around the microphone?

Let's hear first from Dr. Eckert.

**Dr. Eckert:** I have a question for Dr. De River. I agree with him that a parent should be one of the child's best sources of information. But how can that be true when Dr. Felix M. Kirsch of Catholic University of America decries the fact that 98 per cent of our parents, and I quote, "never received the proper information themselves and hence cannot impart it." How can we make up for this?

**Mr. Denny:** Dr. De River, please?

**Dr. De River:** I know nothing about the good doctor, but that has not been my experience. My experience has been quite to the contrary.

**Mr. Denny:** Thank you. Mrs. Boyle, I think you have a question there.

**Mrs. Boyle:** I'd like to direct one to Dr. De River, too. I'd like to ask him if as a result of his experience in the police bureau, dealing with sex offences, if he did not find among those unfortunate people who came before him accused of sex offences a woeful lack of good sex education.

**Dr. De River:** It has been my experience that most of these men have had sex education. Some of them didn't have it, possibly, in the right way, but I don't believe that we could attribute the bulk of the sex offences against lack of education. I think that they had ample education and they knew right from wrong. I can't agree with Mrs. Boyle.

**Dr. Eckert:** I'd like to comment there because it seems to me that Dr. De River is simply using the term "sex education" to mean the knowledge of reproduction. Certainly to me an adequate sex education implies an important use of and understanding of the role of sex in life in its entirety, and these people obviously didn't have that.

**Dr. De River:** I meant nothing of the sort. These men knew all

about sex and its practices. Some of them had gone to the right schools. Many of them were products of public schools, and many of them were boys of religious families, so I'm not limiting the knowledge of sex at all.

**Mr. Denny:** Mrs. Koverman? You're not going to stay quiet there.

**Mrs. Koverman:** Oh, no. I'd like to ask Dr. Eckert a question. He stressed the advantage to teaching in public schools of the use of visual education. Dr. Eckert, might not the same visual assistance be available through magazines, books, pamphlets, et cetera?

**Dr. Eckert:** There have been many excellent books available for years. The facts are that a great percentage of the parents do not know about them, do not use them, do not know how to give their children a beautiful introduction to the sexual side of life.

**Mr. Denny:** Thank you. Mrs. Boyle?

**Mrs. Boyle:** I would like to direct this question to Mrs. Koverman. Throughout her talk, and that of De River, too, it seemed to me they presumed that the schools did not have the ability to teach sex education at its proper level and at the child's need.

To me, that is the business of the school. They deal with children from the first grade on up, and their arguments were based on the assumption that our fine public school people do not possess the

ability to gear a good course in sex education in its broadest implications to the level at which the child can absorb it.

**Mr. Denny:** Thank you. She directed that to Mrs. Koverman.

**Mrs. Koverman:** I had no intention of intimating at all that any of the teachers in the schools were not qualified to teach anything they were supposed to teach. But I do feel that in sending a child to school, you send him to be educated in things that you yourself perhaps can't educate him in as well, but I certainly do feel that sex education should be left to the family. After all, the fathers and mothers bring the children into the world and they certainly ought to have something to say and something to give them besides just clothing them. I feel very definitely that sex education should be taught in the home.

**Mr. Denny:** Thank you. Dr. De River?

**Dr. De River:** I never meant to imply that there weren't capable teachers in the public schools. My contention is that the proper teaching of sex is in the home. But now that the question has been raised by Mrs. Boyle, I wonder just what qualifications a lot of these people do have to teach sex. I should like to ask both of you about that.

**Mr. Denny:** I think Dr. Eckert is ready to comment on that.

**Dr. Eckert:** You can't expect teachers to go out and spend years getting training for something



they won't have an opportunity to teach. Two years ago there were about five institutes in this field operating throughout the United States. Going on right now in the United States there are between twenty and twenty-five. In other words, when teachers are asked to teach this sort of thing, they will qualify themselves and they will be ready to do it.

**Dr. DeRiver:** Isn't it a fact that many teachers are teaching this thing without being asked? (*Laughter.*)

**Mr. Denny:** Mrs. Boyle, because you're a P.T.A.er, suppose you tell us.

**Mrs. Boyle:** In the broad sense of the word in which I like to regard sex education, education for family living, they are teaching it. But the interesting thing is that they made a survey of the Parent-Teachers of Los Angeles County—of all the mothers of the junior and high school level—and of that group, 97 per cent of them stated that they felt incompetent to adequately give their children sex education. In San Diego, 95 per cent of the mothers of the elementary school level asked that their children be given sex education in the elementary schools.

It isn't that we mothers wish to shirk the job of teaching this sort of thing to our children. It's that we need all of the help that we can get from all of the sources. We teach our children to speak,

but when they go to school they learn English and the ramifications of the subject. We teach our children to cook, but when they go to school they learn dietetics. We aren't competing in the field—we're trying to cooperate. (*Applause.*)

**Mr. Denny:** Thank you, Mrs. Boyle. I'm sure we could go on with this, but I see a great many people out in the audience who have questions, and while we get ready for our question period, I am sure you, our listeners, will be interested in the following message.

**Announcer:** You are listening to America's Town Meeting of the Air, originating in Claremont, California, where we are the guests of Claremont Colleges. We are discussing the question, "Should We Teach Sex Education in Our Public Schools?"

You have just heard Dr. Ralph Eckert, Dr. J. Paul DeRiver, Mrs. Carmen Williams Boyle, and Mrs. Ida Koverman. We are about to take questions from our audience.

In the meantime, let me remind you that for your convenience we print each week a complete text, including the questions and answers, in the *Town Meeting Bulletin*, which you may secure by writing to Town Hall, New York 18, New York, enclosing 10 cents to cover the cost of printing and mailing. Allow at least two weeks for delivery. If you would like to subscribe to the *Bulletin* for six

months, inclose \$2.35, or for a year, send \$4.50, or if you would like a trial subscription, enclose \$1.00 for eleven issues.

Incidentally, we think all Town Meeting listeners will be interested in the progress of the three youngsters who appeared on last week's Town Meeting on the subject, "What Is Americanism?" Michael Kivatsky, Joe McNamee, and Bobby Egan. These Town Hall kids are the guests of Governor Lester Hunt in Cheyenne, Wy-

oming, today and are being made honorary citizens of the State of Wyoming. As symbols of their citizenship, they are being presented with ten-gallon hats.

Mickey and Bobby are taking Joe McNamee back to New York with them. The first thing Joe wants to see is Coney Island, which neither Mickey nor Bobby has ever visited. We expect the boys will have a great time there.

Now, for our question period, we return you to Mr. Denny.

# QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Now, the lady in the third row has a question.

*Lady:* This question is directed to Dr. Eckert. Do you believe sex education should be compulsory? If so, how would you overcome the opposition of the churches?

*Dr. Eckert:* The churches are not opposed to sex education. Actually the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., and the church groups have taken the lead for years. They are way ahead of public schools in this matter of boy-girl relationships and all that sort of thing.

When you start integrating material into the curriculum, I don't know how you can stop every time and ask whether this should be taught. This matter becomes—well, where do you differentiate between what is a discussion of boy-and-girl relations?—that certainly is a phase of sex education. Are you going to ask the parents every time? Are you going to eliminate it from all classes? It seems to me that we can depend on the good judgment of teachers to lead the students' thinking along very wholesome lines.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. Eckert. I recognize a minister among the audience I think, next. Yes, sir?

*Man:* I am Henry J. Brubaker, Professor of Pastoral Psychology in Upland. Dr. DeRiver, since you feel that sex education is moral,

how about trained ministers and church workers helping parents and young people in sex instruction?

*Dr. DeRiver:* I heartily approve. I approve of training and the calling upon the clergy to help parents give sex instructions, and I think that where the parents are unable to give the proper instruction through ignorance, or lack of opportunity, there is no closer tie than the pastor of a church, and I heartily approve of their seeking his advice for sex information.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. The gentleman over here on the aisle.

*Man:* My question is for Mrs. Koverman. Isn't it a proven fact that many divorces spring from lack of sex education of either one or both of the parties to the marriage?

*Mrs. Koverman:* I think that's very true. I have no objection whatever to sex education. The only objection I have is the age. I do not think it is necessary to start this education of children in their very young years. I think when a child becomes interested, they should definitely know the facts of life. Does that answer your question?

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Go ahead, do you want to argue with the lady? Go ahead.

*Man:* No, but it seems to me that this education has to start pretty early in order to accomplish



its objective. Most of them are getting educated by the time they go to the marriage license bureau, but it doesn't seem to be early enough in practice, as our divorce-court record would indicate.

*Mrs. Koverman:* Would you advocate then training a child in sex education at the age of five or six or seven? Do you think that's necessary?

*Man:* I believe that's about when it should start.

*Mr. Denny:* Well, there are some people in the audience who evidently agree to that. All right, next question. Thank you.

*Man:* I have a question for Dr. DeRiver. What would you do, Doctor, if parents came to you and asked you to initiate a program of sex education in the schools? They admit their inadequacy in handling the problem.

*Dr. DeRiver:* Under those circumstances, with the consent of the parents, if they took the attitude that they were unable to instruct their child and requested you to do it, you couldn't do anything else but fulfill their request. I think you should go ahead.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Now the gentleman over here for Mrs. Boyle.

*Man:* Mrs. Boyle, you said that 97 per cent of the parents did not feel qualified to teach sex education. Has any survey been made to find out what percentage of the teachers feel qualified to teach sex education?

*Mrs. Boyle:* There is no survey that I know of. Probably—let's say that 97 per cent of the teachers stated that they didn't feel qualified to teach sex education, either. Isn't it time that both parents and teachers learn how to teach sex education? I don't think your observation in any way proves that sex education should not be taught in the schools by people who are trained to teach it and that we should get busy and train them. (Applause.)

*Mr. Denny:* Dr. Eckert is coming to your rescue.

*Dr. Eckert:* I'd like to comment on that because they have polled the teachers in Oregon. It's an interesting thing. The parents were anxious to have the teachers do the work, but they didn't think that the teachers were ready. The teachers thought they were ready to do the work because many of them had been taking in-service training up there for years, but they didn't think the parents were ready to let them. Apparently, it's just a case of the two getting together.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Some of you remember that last week, I had a question from my young son, aged 18. Well, he happens to have a twin sister who is in the audience tonight, and she had a question—and all of you parents know you can't discriminate—now, Mary Virginia Denny, may we have your question?

*Miss Denny:* My question is for

Dr. De River. I am a student at Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri. You state that there is a right and a wrong psychological age to teach a child sex education. What is the right age, psychologically?

*Dr. De River:* I am honored to answer this question. I say that the right age begins when the child asks questions. Answer his questions without dramatizing, whether he's two, three, four, five, six, seven, or any age. That is the right age to begin.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. De River. (*Applause.*)

*Mr. Denny:* I hope Mary Virginia is satisfied. Now, the young lady on the front row, here.

*Lady:* I have a question for Dr. Eckert. Where are we going to stop or draw the line on the subject of teaching sex?

*Dr. Eckert:* I think we can trust our teachers to have good taste and good judgment. If they don't have, they ought not to be teaching in our public schools. Actually, they have been drawing the line way back at the place where they shut off all discussion. All we're asking is that they allow the students to set the pace and try to help the students get the answers to the questions that they want.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Now the lady in the center of the hall, here.

*Lady:* My question is to Mrs. Boyle. How can they know the readiness of each child, being in

different stages of development, as to their innocence to receive the sex education? Public schools often have 48 children in the class, and each one cannot be taken individually.

*Mr. Denny:* Well?

*Mrs. Boyle:* I still go back to what I mean by sex education. To answer her question, what is a school teacher going to do when a question is asked which involves some knowledge of sex? Is she going to say, "Go home and ask your mother." Or is she going to answer the question intelligently? A kindergarten teacher who doesn't answer a question honestly is giving education of a negative sort. She's teaching that sex is something you don't talk about, that it's indecent. That's a part of sex education, too.

*Lady:* My question is addressed to Mrs. Koverman. Mrs. Koverman, give us your comment on the percentage of parents who have backgrounds equipping them adequately to give their children the sort of home training they should have.

*Mrs. Koverman:* That's a pretty hard question to say as to the percentage of parents, but I should think any parent, father or mother, who is married and has children ought to know enough about sex to inform their children on any question they might ask.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Any of you care to comment on that? There seems to be a little disagree-

ment from the audience. Dr. Eckert.

*Dr. Eckert:* Well, if you had talked with as many parents as I have, Mrs. Koverman, you wouldn't say that. I have talked to even physicians and nurses, and they know the facts, but they don't know how to put it into the language of the child. They don't know when to tell the child what. They're very confused and very anxious to have all the help they can get.

*Dr. De River:* That hasn't been my experience. I've recently talked before the Assistance League, and about 98 per cent of the women thought that sex ought to be taught in the homes, and those women who had gone through courtship, marriage, pregnancy, and had children knew all about the facts of life to tell their children.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. De River. I don't dare take a vote here in the audience to ask how many of the members of the audience feel qualified to give their children sex education. I see some children back there who think they're qualified to give their parents sex education. Do you remember the story about the little boy whose father finally decided to take him into his study and talk to him at the age of 15 and tell him about the facts of life? He said, "All right, father, what do you want to know?" Now, here,

the gentleman over on the other side of the aisle.

*Man:* Mrs. Boyle. How can a teacher in a school system educate a community to see the need of sex education in the schools?

*Mrs. Boyle:* I think by probably participating in community organization work. I think that the schools are more and more becoming conscious of the leadership that they have to take in the community through community organizations—I know that's been our experience with them—and by making it known. But I don't think they're going to have to do a selling job. Every group of parents that have honestly sat down and faced the fact of whether they would rather have their children taught behind the barn by their contemporaries the things that they can't teach, have come up with the answer, "Let the public schools help us do the job."

The comment from the Oregon school mothers and parents, I thought, was very timely. After they had tried teaching it there from the first level through the high school, their comment about the film "Human Growth" was "Why not do it sooner?"

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. I hold in my hand now a \$10 bill because the man who is going to ask the next question wins this \$10 bill. They held a little contest here at Claremont before the program here and offered a prize of \$10 for the best question submitted in ad-



vance, and Mr. Seldon won the prize. And here he is. Mr. Seldon, let us have your prize question. You can get that \$10 bill right after the program.

*Mr. Seldon:* Thank you, sir. My question is to Dr. DeRiver. Would it be possible to teach children sex education without involving religious concepts?

*Dr. DeRiver:* I think so. I believe that sex education could be taught without bringing religion into it at all. As I've stated before, when a child begins to ask questions about the facts of life, no matter at what age, without dramatizing, without coloring it, the question should be answered honestly. Does that answer your question?

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. All right, Dr. Eckert wants to comment.

*Dr. Eckert:* Yes, I'd like to comment on that because I think we have failed, perhaps, at the basis of spiritual education, because we have failed to give the child the sense of the miraculous in reproduction. There is no greater miracle performed by God than that, and yet we force children to learn about it too frequently in an unwholesome way. (*Applause.*)

The whole relationship between human beings is one in which there is a very definite spiritual quality. The person who exploits his fellowmen in other areas will exploit them sexually. The person who has reverence for human personality—

that will affect his sex life as well. I don't see how you can separate these at all.

*Dr. DeRiver:* I am a God-fearing man, too. I believe that the miracle of birth is wonderful, but I don't see where sex education has anything to do with it, not at all, and I do not believe that many churches subscribe to sex education being taught in the schools by people, many of whom are not equipped to do so.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. DeRiver. Now, we're going to hear from each one of these speakers individually in just a moment, and while our speakers prepare their summaries of tonight's question, here is a special message of interest to you.

*Announcer:* A few weeks ago the Republicans nominated Governor Dewey and Governor Warren as their standard bearers for presidential and vice presidential nominations. This week, the delegates of the Democratic party assembled in Philadelphia will make their selection. The Socialists have already nominated Norman Thomas, and there doesn't seem to be any doubt about the candidate for what is presently called the Third Party.

From now until November 2, we'll be making up our minds about the candidate for whom we'll vote on that day. Your Town Meeting is anxious to serve you as faithfully as possible during the months ahead and to bring you

programs on the major issues and, if possible, with the candidates themselves. Anything you, our listeners, can do to help bring this about will be all to the good.

We are eagerly reading your letters for suggestions for programs about the major issues in the campaign, and we're carefully watching the weekly ballots of our audiences as we move about the country. We suggest that you urge your candidate to appear on Town Meeting, and send your suggestions for programs on the major issues in the campaign to Town Hall 18, New York.

Now for the summaries of tonight's discussion, here is Mr. Denny.

*Mr. Denny:* And here first is Mrs. Ida Koverman.

*Mrs. Koverman:* In summing up the program, I personally do not feel that any arguments have been presented here tonight to change my position in the least. I still feel strongly that the responsibility is definitely that of the parents, and if the parents fail, the entire system may eventually result in children being taken from their parents at a very early age and educated en bloc, which would certainly be deplorable.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Mrs. Koverman. And now, Mrs. Boyle, please.

*Mrs. Boyle:* As I said at the conclusion of my brief talk in the beginning, to help our young people meet the complexities and

challenges of life today, the best we can give is demanded of our homes, churches, communities, and schools.

This cannot be accomplished under an either-or philosophy but requires that we all work together. All the skills, techniques, and knowledge that we have in this field must be used to the ends that our children develop a healthier and better understanding of themselves and their relations to others. Let us look to the schools to help us become better parents. Let us as good parents say to the schools, "Go ahead."  
(*Applause.*)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Mrs. Boyle. Now, Dr. De River.

*Dr. De River:* Dr. Eckert, as a member of the adult education, is in the right department where sex should be taught. Sex education for children is a God-given right of the parent. Dr. Eckert is calling upon the parent to give the "go" signal. I call upon the parents to stop before it is too late in the name of God. (*Applause.*)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. De River. Now, Dr. Eckert.

*Dr. Eckert:* Is anyone satisfied with the present delinquency and divorce figures? And yet how much help do we give young people in understanding what it means to become a man or a woman? Why is it that we require more preparation for a driver's license than for a marriage license?



Is there any reason why the school cannot prepare boys and girls for marriage, as it attempts to meet their other needs? Is there any greater need today than to teach boys and girls to have more wholesome relations with each other? Or of men and women to live together more harmoniously? It can be done—it must be done. (*Applause.*)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. Eckert, Dr. De River, Mrs. Carmen Williams Boyle, and Mrs. Ida Koverman for a grand contribution to an extremely difficult and very important question which we Americans must find a solution for in our own way.

And thanks to our host, the four Claremont Colleges, including Pomona College, Scripps College, Claremont Men's College, and Claremont Graduate School.

And let me remind you once again, that if you, our listeners, want a copy of tonight's broadcast, send 10 cents to Town Hall, New York 18, New York.

Now, during the next four weeks, your moderator will re-

main here in Southern California, but your Town Meeting will continue with distinguished guest moderators, all of whom have appeared on Town Meeting as speakers or guest moderators before. My associates, Marian Carter here on the west coast, and Elizabeth Colclough in Town Hall, New York, will continue to arrange our programs in response to your wishes.

Next week, when our program originates in Oakland Auditorium in Oakland, California, our subject will be, "Does Military Preparedness Mean Security?" Our speakers will be Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander of the Amphibious Forces in the Pacific during the war; Vera Micheles Dean, Research Director of the Foreign Policy Association of New York City; and Carey McWilliams, author and west coast editor of *The Nation*, and former national vice chairman of the Progressive Citizens of America.

So plan to be with us next Tuesday and every Tuesday at the sound of the Crier's Bell. (*Applause.*)

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